

Message Text

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ACTION DHA-02

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-13 ACDA-07 AID-05 IGA-02
OMB-01 /076 W

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P 041917Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2490

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: SHUM, PFOR, NU

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHSTS: GON REBUTTAL TO RIDING ARTICLE

1. REBUTTAL TO RIDING ARTICLE IN NEW YORK TIMES ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN NICARAGUA BY GON PRESS SPOKESMAN BERMUDEZ IS HEADLINED ON FRONT PAGE OF MARCH 4 NOVEDADES. RIDING ARTICLE HAS NOT APPEARED IN LOCAL PAPERS SO LOCAL READERS CAN ONLY KNOW WHAT BERMUDEZ IS RESPONDING TO BY READING BETWEEN THE LINES. THE HEADLINE IS "EL CRIMEN LO MANEJA LA SUBVERSION", I.E., SUBVERSION IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CRIMES.

2. THE SUBSTANCE OF THE REBUTTAL IS THAT RIDING'S REPORT IS INEFFECT AND DISTORTED. THE CRIMES RESULT FROM REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITIES SPONSORED BY CASTRO'S CUBA. THESE CRIMES, WHICH HAVE INCLUDED ASSASSINATION, SACKING AND ARSON, HAVE FORCED PEASANTS TO FLEE. THE FACT THAT THE GUERRILLAS USE MILITARY WEAPONS, UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT CONFUSES THE PEOPLE. BOMBINGS HAVE NOT TAKEN PLACE.

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3. THE PRESS RELEASE SAYS IT IS SURPRISING THAT RIDING WOULD WRITE SUCH GRAVE CHARGES BASED ONLY ON SECOND-HAND INFORMATION. WITH REGARD TO RIDING'S SOURCES, DEFAMATION CHARGES WILL BE MADE AGAINST CORDOBA RIVAS, THE LAWYER FOR FSLN DEFENDANTS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE REBUTTAL REFERS TO THE BISHOP'S PASTORAL LETTER AS WELCOMED BY THE GON IN THAT IT IS A CALL FOR PEACE AND RESPECT

FOR THE LAW. NO MENTION IS MADE OF THE CAPUCHINS OR PEDRO'.
CHAMORRO.

4. COMMENT: THE REBUTTAL IS A MEASURED REASONABLE RESPONSE TO THE
RIDING ARTICLE BUT AT THE SAME TIME POINTS UP THE CATCH-22
SITUATION. RIDING'S STORY IS BASED ON SECOND-HAND OR FURTHER
REMOVED SOURCES. WITHOUT A LARGE-SCALE INVESTIGATION IT IS IM-
POSSIBLE TO ESTABLISH THE FACTS. EVEN WITH SUCH AN INVESTIGATION,
THE FINDINGS WOULD PROBABLY TURN ON SUBJECTIVE OR INTERPRETIVE
OBSERVATION. THE REFERENCE TO CONFUSION AMONG THE CAMPESINOS AS
TO WHO HAS BEEN BRUTALIZING THEM IS A VIRTUAL ADMISSION THAT THEY
HAVE BEEN BRUTALIZED AND BELIEVE THE NATIONAL GUARD (GN) IS
RESPONSIBLE. IN THIS CIRCUMSTANCE, THE GON IS UNDERSTANDABLY
RELUCTANT TO HAVE INVESTIGATORS ASK THE PEASANTS WHETHER THEY
HAVE BEEN BRUTALIZED AND WHO IS RESPONSIBLE. THEY ALREADY KNOW
WHAT THE ANSWER IS LIKELY TO BE. AT THE SAME TIME THE DOCTRINE OF
BOTH THE GN AND THE FSLN IS TO WIN THE "HEARTS AND MINDS" OF THE
PEOPLE. IT IS EMB'S JUDGMENT THAT BOTH SIDES DEVIATE FROM DOCTRINE
FROM TIME TO TIME.
THEBERGE

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